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EDMUND BERGER: ON ART AND REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION IN THE AGE OF BLOCKCHAIN

MASHINES ART, BLOCKCHAIN, DIGITAL, INNOVATION, REVOLUTION, TEHNOLOGY

…measured against the conditions of the present, communism itself embodies the most alien of all possible futures.

—Edmund Berger

Edmund Berger author of *Uncertain Futures: An Assessment of the Conditions of the Present* (see my review) has for years done his homework in uncovering the historical traces of the Marxist tradition and its pertinence and continuing relevance for critique in our social and economic predicament. *Waveforms: Art and Revolutionary Transformation in the Age of Blockchain* which will be published in ŠUM #10 along with an essay by Nick Land argues – in rebuttal of Peter Thiel's comment that "Crypto is libertarian, AI is communist" – that it "is not that blockchain is intrinsically communist rather than libertarian, but that there is a proliferation of potential futures that stretch out from our contemporary historical moment, which itself is characterized by an all-pervasive decadence. This is not decadence understood first and foremost as a moral stagnation or reactionary theory of civilizational decay, nor as any sort of absolute law; instead, decadence is a kind of aberrant moment in which the development of productive forces is tossed out of joint from the creative turbulence that typifies the long-range evolution of industrial systems."1

Looked at from another direction such moments or events could take on the hue of intersecting paradigms, the notion of a black hole opening in time that allows the forces and tendencies within both the social and technological systems of an era to synergize releasing innovations both in the cultural and technological matrix. In the past thirty years the movement from analogue technologies to digital in the sector of Information and Communications Technologies has impacted civilizational forces across the board. With the emergence of public access networks of which the Internet or World Wide Web is the outgrowth a change in global communications and information exchange blossomed allowing for cross-border and transnational symbolic economies to change the structure of social relations along with the way economies East/West interoperate.

The Internet itself grew out of the old ARPANET defense networks first conceived as the base infrastructure of a global communications network that would withstand the impact of Nuclear War. During the 90's with the rise of Apple and Microsoft the personal computer came online and offered the public at large access to these networks that had been controlled and regulated within the Academic and Military sectors. With this came an influx of monetary investment that would spark

technological innovations and new social-media technologies that would change the very way we interact at the local and global scales. With the advent of broadband and mobile phones that allowed for instant communication between parties whether through commercial or personal contacts people were no longer bound to the static desktop systems of the PC. Computers, the Internet and symbolic exchange became mobile, moving technologies that would bring the power of tracking, indexing, advanced analytics, and algorithmic governance all in one tiny package. The secret of all these technologies was already latent in early notions of social control which had been at the heart of predictive and calculable computational theory from the early invention of computers.

The power of the mobile phone is that it hides this underlying world of algorithmic governance, the applications that give us enjoyment and meaningful exchange, that help us search and discover the world of commercial, travel, social and sexual delights is also controlled by large corporations that secretly collect data about our activities both private and collective. The Age of Big Data, Cloud computing, and the targeted attention capturing analytics that track, filter, segment, analyze, and dividualize as digital traces and ciphers is in the hands of unknown and untrusted agents of power, both commercial and governmental. Because of this Berger lifts us from our blind and almost naïve understanding of the toys we play with into the secret world of power that seeks to control our lives. As he'll say,

"History", in a sense, is produced through the technologies, or more properly in the interactions between agents in an environment set and conditioned by the objects and systems that impart the paradigm shift.

This notion that technology and the human are shaped in a reciprocal relation, conditioned by the very technological innovations that we see as mere conveniences provide the key to change in political, social, and economic spheres. Berger introduces the work of Carlota Perez and her notions surrounding technological paradigm shifts and their impact on our lives. Perez's works seek to understand the role of knowledge and technology in the well-being of societies and the relationship, if any, between technology and social structures.2

Perez's shifting techno-economic paradigm's framework predicted that the turning point for the current ICT-led (Information and Communications Technologies) techno-economic paradigm should have taken place during the first years of twenty-first century. What started as a bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000 ended in 2008 as a full-blown global financial crisis. This is, then, the turning point and thus, we are confronting the need for sweeping institutional changes to bring forth a "golden age" based on the global spread of the growth potential of the current paradigm based on information technology. Indeed, while successive technological revolutions and their techno-economic paradigms are, as Perez shows, the fundamental feature of capitalism after the industrial revolution, the turning points in the middle of these paradigms are historic occasions when capitalism is reconfigured to save itself from itself. (TP, 2) This is how Perez sums up the ideas of great surges and paradigms:

There has been a technological revolution every 40 to 60 years, beginning with the Industrial Revolution in England at the end of the 18th Century; each has generated a great surge of development, diffusing unevenly across the world from an initial core country. … The great wealth creating potential provided by each of them stems from the combination of the new technologies, industries and infrastructures with a set of generic technologies and organisational principles capable of modernising the rest of the economy. The resulting best practice frontier is superior to the previous one and becomes the new common sense for efficiency – a new techno-economic paradigm – that defines the guidelines for innovation and competitiveness. … The propagation is highly uneven in coverage and timing, by sectors and by regions, in each country and across the world. (Perez 2006)3

As Berger will comment through "this model, we can glimpse how certain technological systems stand apart from others in that they act not as auxiliary or components to some abstract economic machinery, but "activate" the clusters of innovations so as to transform the entirety of economic, political, and social life." In his essay Berger will detail Perez's framework and the five major waves or paradigms identified since the early industrial revolution, each centered on a radical innovation. He describes it as the paradigm shifts from electricity to mass production of the Fordist era, and the introduction of ICT technologies of the Post-Fordist paradigm (see diagram below):

Techno-Economic Paradigm	*Installation Phase*
Industrial Revolution	**Early 1770s–1790s**
Age of Steam Power	**1829–1840s**
Age of Electricity	**1875–mid-1890s**
Age of Mass Production (Fordism)	**1910–late 1920s**
Age of Information Communication Technology	**1980s–2000**

Berger will show the underlying patterns in the various mechanics of these turns and shifts in technological innovation and it's techno-economic impact. In describing Perez's notions he will tell us that on the "surface this appears as the flat, utopic rendering of the market economy praised by the classical liberal economists and the various bourgeois ideologues that followed in their wake. It is, however, anything but; piercing the veil of image and looking at it from the position of systems unfolding in time, formal subsumption is a point in the longer march of capital's valorization." At this point in the essay he will diagnose and critique the underlying model of control and domination by machinic systems and technologies that has arisen from capital's slow and methodical Autonomization, saying,

It is no surprise, then, that the Fordist pop imaginary was haunted by the now retro-futurist dream of unbridled automation and unlimited free time.

Moving from the Fordist to Post-Fordist era this emerging economy of unbridled automation and free time takes on a sinister hue as Berger defines it telling us that in post-capitalist society the absolute capture of things by capitalism "dims, if not outright liquidates, the revolutionary possibilities that Marx had anticipated". And, yet, the promise of the neoliberal techno-economic vision of a utopia of "leisure time" has been "eliminated outright, and what remains is colonized by the frantic pace of the 'attention economy', constantly advancing automation has done little to alleviate the degradation of labor (much less shorten the working week and working day), and scientific progress appears to be compounding these conditions instead of illuminating alternative pathways."

Yet, as Berger surmises, there is the possibility that the techno-economic innovations emerging in our contemporary setting (i.e., Bitcoin and Blockchain technologies) may "perhaps hold the possibility to overcome this phase of apparent decadence". Turning form paradigm shifts and the hard-nosed Marxian dimension of economics he will open his work to the aesthetic dimension, returning us to the extravagant and imaginative visions of Charles Fourier:

Fourierists were committed to active experimentation to bring about their ideal social formation— and, as to be expected, these experiments more often than not ended in the dissolution of the communities in question.

He'll offer a summary of Herbert Marcuse's notions of performativity and liberation, which for Marcuse " is precisely the releasing of this libidinal charge from its repression, and it is by way of this unshackling of the pleasure principle that the despotism of the reality principle comes to be abolished". The result of this mechanization of life under capitalist atomization is the mechanization of human labour producing alienation: "the individual is choked off from itself, the split between the performative nature of the reality principle and the wild drift of the pleasure principle reverberating through the divisions of the capitalist world and the so-called solutions it gives to the social problem". Ultimately the *performance principle* at the heart of Marcuse's project will lead him into a blind alley in which as Berger comments:

…moving beyond the performance principle, to the realignment of the libido with expenditure and reason with flourishing, instinctively elevates civilization into the aesthetic dimension. The role of technical systems is clear as well: how could one hope to realize, without abandoning oneself the idle masturbation of idealism, a "purposiveness without purpose" and a "lawfulness without law" without finding optimal state of "total automation"?

Berger will turn form Marcuse to Deleuze/Guattari (Anti-Oedipus, A Thousand Plateaus) and Mark Fisher (Capitalist Realism, etc.) and the notion of "psychedelic reason" as the liberatory path forward will be addressed.

Capital … operates on the plane of immanence, through relays and networks of relationships of domination, without reliance on a transcendent center of power. It tends historically to destroy traditional social boundaries, expanding across territories and enveloping always new populations within its processes.

—Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire

Capitalism arose out of that feudalistic world of Old Europe. With the expulsion of the peasantry from their landed world of

subsistence a mobile force of propertyless workers were forced into the emerging centers of commerce around Europe. Through the enticement of money these peasants were enslaved by a new form of value that incorporated them in a new form of automated production. This new world of capitalism was not controlled from on high by magnates or aristocrats, but functioned by a calculus of profit, surplus value, and exploitation which only later were revealed as immanent laws within the actual praxis of capital itself. Capital was hooked to technology, economics, and the sciences from the beginning; innovation, growth, and expansion became the trio of this immanent determinism that would lead capital through ever accelerating cycles of recursive reengineering as it tore through the age old customs, traditions, and cultures of the planet dissolving human relations, politics, and religious-secular systems of human solidarity. Capital has always sought to escape the clutches of human sovereignty in all its forms, whether of political, social, or the legal mesh of some transcendent axiomatic. In our time capital seeks absolute sovereignty in immanent Autonomization of its own projects, divorcing and separating itself from the chains of human politics and law.

"Historically, capital has relied on sovereignty and the support of its structures of right and force, but those same structures continually contradict in principle and obstruct in practice the operation of capital, finally obstructing its development."1

This and this alone is the contradiction to which capital has applied its immanent force through various stages of techno-economic change across the vectors of the past few hundred years. In our time capital has migrated to the immanent domain of the network where the accelerating speed of calculability and algorithmic intelligence have begun governing the immaterial empire of a global network society. No longer bound to the sovereignty of the Nation State that once served it and supported its integrity capital has vanished from its domain leaving the husk of a depleted system dying and decaying in the ruins of its last gasp. And, yet, capital itself is a still there in the immaterial networks of a material civilization arising out of the ruins of the sovereign decadence of outmoded nations and their securitized systems of protection. As Hardt and Negri put it communication is the "form of capitalist production in which capital has succeeded in submitting society entirely and globally to its regime, suppressing all alternative paths" (ibid.).

THE DIONYSIAN GAMBIT

Positive or Dionysian affirmation, critique, these things are intimately bound together; in their unity, one traces out the act of *creation*.

—Edmund Berger

For Berger the Nietzschean affirmation is neither fully positive nor negative, but an oscillation in-between two figures of *nihil* in movement with the central motif of aphoristic and poetic transformation Nietzsche once described as the *transvaluation of all values*:

A culture that is held under the sway of nihilism is a culture moored in sickness, while the culture that is marked by the overman or the artist-tyrant is full of health. There is a direct correlation between the vitality of culture and the overcoming of sickness; likewise, the deployment of the affirmative and the negative together in the Dionysian yes constitutes something of a cure. (Berger)

But what is this cure? If the toxicity of the *pharmakon* is prone to poisonous dissipation then is this overcoming in itself a metamorphosis rather than a transvaluation, a movement out of the humanistic vision of sovereignty and into one that is either transhuman, posthuman, or inhuman? More like a later day Plato whose notions of the sovereign the philosopher ruler seem to invigorate an anti-platonic form of sophrosyne in which the powers of mind/body are in harmonious relation, and the new "philosopher-physician, tasked with delivering the cure to civilization" (Berger) becomes the harbinger of both an exit and a voice of the new dispensation. This movement of the philosopher as artist whose powers of critique and diagnostic appraisal would lead humanity out of the ruins of a decaying society and civilization follow from Kant, Nietzsche and other formidable progenitors of surprise and the new:

Just as the reduction of the laborer in the increasingly "autonomous" character of industrial systems brings to the surface the elements vital to a post-capitalist civilization, so too does this leveling engender the conditions for the overman, that which overcomes nihilism. (Berger)

Yet, in rebuttal to such an *Übermensch* ("…the production of a synthetic, summarizing, justifying man for whose existence this transformation of mankind into a machine is a precondition."49) Berger will tell us,

The artist-tyrant, the philosopher-physician, collides with the revolutionary force, but here we must refrain from going too far and take heed of Marx and Marcuse: philosopher and art, while in need holding a revolutionary potential, cannot be revolutionary in and of themselves. They are but (vital) aspects of the revolutionary machine, but are not capable of being equated to it outright. (Berger)

Instead he will turn from the Nietzsche-Deleuze overman toward the Spinozist *psychedelic reason* posited by Mark Fisher. Such a reason seeks health and control of body and mind, a path of freedom from the chains of capitalist production and the alien or inhuman force of its parasitic tentacles. Following William Burroughs Fisher will assume a paranoiac structure of alienation in

which we are controlled by exterior networks and forces of an unhuman calculability and instrumentality. As Berger will put it:

To be held under the sway of an alien force, Fisher insists, is by no means a metaphorical occupation—and this had stark implications for any professed inflection of autonomy or freedom on behalf on the human within the current world. Simply put, there can be no *real autonomy or freedom until the constraints placed on the human subject are annihilated*.

Reza Negarestani in a post on Toy Philosophy (following Sandor Ferenzi) will describe this alien/alienating parasitic structure:

Unlike the death drive, the alien will is not a general force or tendency. It is in fact not even inexorable. The alien will is the register of a quotidian yet at the same time malevolent power which is bent on destruction precisely because it is the expression of a power that has gone unchecked, unmoderated and unnoticed as if it was something inevitable, something that is just a part of the order of things. As such the alien will is a possessive power. Yet unlike the demonic possession, where the demon flaunts its power by inflicting explicit pain and punishment on the agonized possessed person, the alien will is sinisterly subtle. It silently encroaches upon the will—whether as the rational will which is necessary for individuation or as the capacity for choice and the exercise of freedom. Its ultimate mission is to deprive the person of its will for the sake of mundane advantages. First by pretending that it is in fact part of the person's will, part of its desires and goals. Once, the encroachment phase is successfully accomplished, it then initiates a thoroughgoing destruction of the person's psyche step by step. (see The Psyche and the Carrion)

In many ways one might see in the above description the immanent truth of capital itself as an alien force with its own parasitic growth and control of the human agent over time in its pursuit toward material incarnation and intelligent recreation on the plane of immanence. Enlarge the frame of reference to include the larger social collectivity of the general intellect as agent and one see the power of capital at work masking its telos toward autonomy while all the while bringing about the complete and utter ruination and annihilation of its human hosts and their civilization in the process of its escape and exit from the terrestrial bindings in an unbinding of nihil at its core.

And, yet, as Berger reminds us both Fisher and Deleuze will seek to obviate such a dark and sinister scenario: "they both deviate from the apparatuses and instrumentalization of "social alienation" by looking for a continuity that stretches through and beyond this dismantling, one that uses this dismantling in accordance with a logic—a new reason—that builds a scaffolding to the new world." (Berger) In fact Berger will explore this notion of originary technicity or the reciprocal power and influence of technics and technology to reengineer both the physical and spiritual aspects of humanity through the work of Burroughs who used the technology of the tape-recorder:

Burroughs "took seriously the possibilities for the metonymic equation between tape recorder and body. He reasoned that if the body can become a tape recorder, the voice can be understood not as a naturalized union of voice and presence but as a mechanical production with the frightening ability to appropriate the body's vocal apparatus and use it for ends alien to the self."60 (Berger)

This degradation of the collective life of humanity both at its local (individual) and global (multiplicity) is according to Bernard Stiegler coeval with the development the arche-program, that is, the informatic synchronization of the scientific, technological, and economic systems that make up hyperindustrial society.3 This decreation of the human into the inhuman in the hyperindustrialization of technocratic capital completes Nietzsche's notions of nihilism: a calculable, instrumentalised, and computational society of automation which is displacing human knowledge of how to live and be human. In such a world the immanent laws of capital unbound from human constraint capture the human forms of emotion and knowledge to other ends than human society and its well-being and care. As Stiegler puts it the "absolutely computational contemporary libidinal diseconomy no longer economizes its objects and so destroys and dissipates its subjects – who destroy themselves by conforming to the automated prescriptions of computational capitalism.4

Berger will test his notions of the philosopher-artist as diagnostician, clinical tactician, and aesthetic strategist through a lengthy discussion of Russian communist implementations of which I will leave the reader to ponder. In the end he will return us to the beginning from which he set out and how the impact of the new blockchain technologies are shaping both capital and society. As he'll tell us we "now have two different perspectives with which to approach the technology: a techno-economic approach and an aesthetico-political approach" (Berger).

Following Perez and enthusiastic promoters of the new blockchain technologies Berger surmises "if we're well into roll-out phase of an emergent new paradigm, then the "deployment" phase of the ICT wave was severely truncated—" (Berger). For Berger two possibilities emerge from this using the Perez waveform theory: the first possibility is that the rate of technological change is compressing the duration of installation and deployment phases, while the second possibility is that blockchain, while important, is not going to mark the introduction of a new wave. (Berger)

He'll study each of these in detail and conclude saying,

It is the temporal compression hypothesis, however, that serves as the location for the far more common understanding of blockchain as the ideal weapon for those of a libertarian and/or anarcho-capitalist inclination. Blockchain here still serves as a tool of governance and perhaps would still be a key infrastructure in an administrative body; the difference, however, is that it

would engender a great crack— or series of cracks—in the world, a widening rift through which fragmentation freely flows as people gain the ability to choose *exit* over *voice*. (Berger)

Albert O. Hirshman in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* described this exit and voice in organizational terms that are applicable in scale to family, business, or state. In this sense blockchain technologies may cause a rift in current global techno-economics in which the forces of Big Data, AGI, Law, Banks, State are all invested in a form of algorithmic governance that captures every aspect of the consumer society as data that can be aligned with both commercial and the military-industrial complex in a nexus of computational and calculable techno-scientific economics of a society of control. Blockchain may server as a disrupting technology that would afford the proletariat a new detournement or decentering from the massive control systems of the Techno-Commercium. In this form the citizenry stops playing the political game, exits the systems of the techno-commercium and/or the knowledge workers who operate this vast networking world of the techno-economic system leave – refuse to work. The point of the exit over voice option is simply this: the voice options – which is the whole gamut of activist protest over the past twenty years has not worked or produced the change in the social behaviours of the capitalist hierarchy.

The embarkation offered by bitcoin and blockchain technologies may produce the rupture necessary to cause a mass exit of the current techno-economic system and its institutions:

In the most elaborate—and thus most interesting—iteration of this perspective, bitcoin and blockchain are the initial shock of a truly multipolar globe where the world-system is tossed into a continual flux through the unending proliferation of trustless peer-to-peer networks, decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs), and self-sufficient, independent corporate city states. (Berger)

As Berger puts it this is the line of thought put forward by the Neoreactionary libertarian of Alt-Right factions whose intellectual leaders were found in Mencius Moldbug and Nick Land:

This latter element is the line picked and pursued by the various post-libertarian, post-anarcho-capitalist thinkers in the neoreactionary camp, mostly notable Mencius Moldbug (the nom de plume of computer scientist Curtis Yarvin) and the philosopher Nick Land. Both Moldbug and Land contextualize the coming change as the creation of a global patchwork of competitive sovereign units, organized along neocameralist lines—that is, a sort of mercantile joint-stock corporate structure that collapses together the economic and the political. (Berger)

Describing the Landian cosmo-politics of a futurial entity and techno-economic attractor toward which capital is being drawn as if by a telos: the occulted telos of capital is one of constant escape; while in the future this may take the form of some sort of absolute escape, a capital becoming some sort of synthetic life form, closer to the present this manifests through the introduction of blockchain. Or, as he quotes Land, saying: "If capital is escaping," writes Land, "the emergence of blockchain is an inevitable escalation of modernity, with consequences too profound for easy summary. If it isn't, then macroeconomics might work." (Berger)

Yet, Berger, is not buying it, for his study of history shows that monopoly capital which in our time is taking on the new mask of "Platform Capitalism": Capital may be be autonomous from the nation state, but money too is held by a progressively smaller number of individuals. (Berger)

My problem with this is that the centralized tendencies are not within bitcoin and blockchain, but rather within the Silicon Valley nexus of entrepreneur capitalism guided by Big Data, AGI, and algorithmic governance and attention economy it supports which are backed by both National and Military-Industrial components of the state on the one hand and the outmoded banking institutions that are the cornerstone of the global neoliberal techno-commercium. The whole point of the bitcoin and blockchain technologies is to disrupt this very core of the old system, to decentralize its power and control over the proletarianized human base allowing for a trustless – i.e., no longer requiring middle-organizational systems from Law/Insurance/State/Bank, etc. – to act as trust bearers of money and knowledge transfer and exchange. Thereby making the great Nation State institutions obsolete overnight and instituting a new regime of open and decentralized social, political, and economic systems based on a future directed network society that is borderless and deterritorialized.

Of course Edmund will have none of this, for what he sees it more centralized oversight and regulation coming: "considering the potential trajectory of blockchain technologies in light of this brings us closer to the territory of the delayed deployment hypothesis, in which blockchain, along with the decentralizing possibilities inherent in it, is actualized in pursuit of an optimal mode of regulation." (Berger) And, it might work that way, as presented in such works a Primavera De Filippi De Filippi's *Blockchain and the Law: The Rule of Code* where she acknowledges this potential and urge the law to catch up. That is because disintermediation—a blockchain's greatest asset—subverts *critical regulation*. By cutting out middlemen, such as large online operators and multinational corporations, blockchains run the risk of undermining the capacity of governmental authorities to supervise activities in banking, commerce, law, and other vital areas. If so then one will see Nation States across the globe re-centering their power base and enacting laws both at the local and global level of transnational legal systems to curtail this bid for exit. This has happened in the past and one will expect such a retrenchment from the Oligarchic hegemony of monied classes as they seek through legal and commercial means to put a stop to this liberation of capital from institutionalized control.

Berger will return to the philosopher-artist as Artist-Engineer of a new sociality as he reads Mark Fisher's acknowledgement of Nick Land and L. M. Sabsovich. Fisher in his appraisal of the neo-reactionary Land will tell the Left that in such figures as Land there is a vision totally contrary to the goals and ambitions of the political left, but it is also a vision that this left must engage with

if it wants to stake any claim on the world-system-to-come. (Berger) As Fisher puts it:

Land's texts […] expose an uncomfortable contradiction between the radical left's official commitment to revolution, and its actual tendency towards political and formal-aesthetic conservatism […] Where is the left that can speak as confidently in the name of an alien future, that can openly celebrate, rather than mourn, the disintegration of existing socialities and territorialities?87 (Berger)

As for Sabsovich his approach affords the Left an "approach to the current rule of life by abstraction, impersonal systems, and apparently runaway techno-economic development the same way that the various avant-gardes approached the technologies of Fordism and even the nascent infrastructures of post-Fordism" (Berger).

Summing up the new blockchain technologies Berger remonstrating with the Left whose appraisal of it as a libertarian tool, praised by the anarcho-capitalists as the means of progressing towards the minimal state, or to perhaps even more atomized forms of politico-economic behavior, the blockchain appears as something that has no place in the sort of future that is being discussed here. (Berger) Ultimately for Berger its a tightrope act, one in which we must "avoid either pitfall, of either the libertarian or anarcho-capitalist—or, even further, the neoreactionary— positions, or of the left-liberal, social-democratic-like solutions to the developmental question, all of which sequester themselves under the rubric of the performance principle." (Berger) For him it returns to the political:

The questions are, ultimately, of a political nature, and can in no way be reduced to the figure of the blockchain, for they are embedded in the matrices of centuries-long development, one that weighs on the ability for us to act—but there is also an aesthetic component here, as we have seen. It is the component that tries to articulate in advance a political vision that it can never capture, but in doing so produces something essential for the struggle to realize that vision: the reclamation of modernity, the opening-up of an alternative modernity that executes the vital task of breaking with the past with the goal of realizing a New Reality Principle, a New Reason. (Berger)

Jacques Derrida and his disciple Bernard Stigler would formulate the notion of the *pharmakon* rather than politics as the motif of human and technological change. The linkages between science, technology and the global organization of capitalism being for both the condition of the endemic proletarianization of life in Western industrial democracies. For Stiegler this consists of the progressive liquidation of the symbolic forms (completed nihilism) through which the fundamental elements of human life are given meaning, that is, the class affiliations that form around collective labour, the familial ties through which the reproductive drive is sublimated, and the political duties that attach to citizenship of the nation state. Because of this the toxicity of current capitalist forms of algorithmic governmentality have brought about a degradation of social life and created an atomized society whose destructive capacity is centered in the new media technologies: the virtual and informatic systems through which social relations are staged, bringing about a colonization of the cognitive life of youth and old alike by a calculative logic of the market. Proletarianization, therefore, is the process through which the reflective and expressive potential of human beings has become toxified and degraded, a decadence of infoglut in which human attention is siphoned off into the externalized data systems that are essentially programmatic and inhuman: a system that has become for all intents and purposes so ingrained within the current generation that the older social forms of cohesion of educational, political, and participatory forms of learning and engagement have been severed. What we are left with is a humanity of completed nihilism, dependent on its external memory (tertiary) knowledge systems to know more about themselves than they do; while at the same time taking the decisioning process out of human reflection and putting it into the very machinic processes of synthetic agents and intelligences to make our decisions for us. In such a world will politics still matter? Can politics even be thought in such a world? In a world where our ability to reflect and think are no longer ours to do but are the givens of our artificial agents and machinic cousins will humanity as *homo politicos* even exist anymore?

1. Berger, Edmund. Šum #10.2. Visit Edmund at his new blog DI Research Zone 22.
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